

October 18, 2016

Senate Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Committee
Senator Goeff Hansen, Chairman
Michigan Senate
Lansing, MI

Dear Chairman Hansen and Committee Members,

MBG Marketing fully supports Michigan legislation to name the blueberry the official berry of the State of Michigan. Our grower-owned cooperative organization, Michigan Blueberry Growers Association, was formed in 1936 by thirteen of the original growers of highbush blueberries in our state. This year, our coop membership happily celebrates their 80-years of successfully growing blueberries in Michigan.

Michigan consistently ranks at the top of the charts – and often in the top spot – in *world* blueberry production with over 100 million pounds projected to have been Michigan grown, packed and sold in 2016. It is one of the few fruits that can be eaten fresh with no peel, pit or core to dispose of, and also enjoyed in a variety of frozen, dried or juice forms and products year-round. A one-cup serving of blueberries contains only 80 calories and virtually no fat. One serving delivers almost 25% of one's daily requirement of Vitamin C. A handful of blueberries helps satisfy recommended daily fiber intake and is an excellent source of Manganese, which plays an important role in bone development. It is the perfect snack for kids of all ages!

It is estimated there are about 600 family farms growing blueberries in our fair state and South Haven, Michigan, is the annual host of the recognized National Blueberry Festival celebrating our favorite little blue dynamos. The annual crop value to the Michigan economy is over 100 million dollars, and the additional economic benefit to our state cascades well beyond that.

What you may, or may not know, is there are only three fruits that are native to our great country, one of those is the blueberry – the others are cranberry and grape. Before our modern blueberry industry was drawn together by a Michigan State extension specialist over 80-years ago, blueberries were found growing in Michigan as native species at least 100-years ago.

Blueberries are as American as apple-pie, and more "Michigan" than any other berry. We welcome the recognition the State Berry of Michigan designation would bestow upon our delicious blue fruit.

Lorrie Ford Merker
V.P Grower Relations and Cooperative Affairs
MBG Marketing





Blueberry BASICS

In addition to their sweet, delectable flavor and visual appeal, blueberries are jam-packed with good nutrition. They're a convenient little berry—at home in pies and pancakes, salads, smoothies and sauces. Or, simply wash and eat—no peeling, pitting or slicing needed!



HOW TO BUY BLUEBERRIES

Fresh blueberries are most plentiful during the summer months, but you will find them in the market all year round, along with frozen, canned and dried blueberries.

When purchasing fresh blueberries, look for firm, plump, dry berries with smooth skins and a silvery sheen. Size doesn't matter, but color does—reddish berries aren't ripe, but can be used in cooking. Avoid soft or shriveled fruit, or any signs of mold. Containers with juice stains indicate that the fruit may be bruised.



HOW TO STORE BLUEBERRIES

Refrigerate fresh blueberries as soon as you get them home, in their original plastic pack or in a covered bowl or storage container. Wash berries just before use. Use within 10 days of purchase.



HOW TO FREEZE BLUEBERRIES

The secret to successful freezing is to use berries that are unwashed and completely dry. Discard berries that look bruised or shriveled. Place the berries, still in their original plastic pack, in a resealable plastic bag. Or, transfer berries to freezer containers or resealable freezer bags. The berries will freeze individually and you can remove just the portion you need. Remember to rinse them before using.



BLUEBERRY SERVING SUGGESTIONS

- Add blueberries to your favorite muffin recipe—about 1 cup for each batch of 12 muffins. Gently stir in the blueberries at the end (unthawed, if frozen).
- Dot pancake batter with blueberries as soon as batter has been poured on the griddle.
- Make a breakfast parfait by layering blueberries with flavored yogurt and granola cereal in a tall glass.
- Sprinkle blueberries and chopped walnuts over dressed mixed greens.
- Serve blueberries with sour cream or yogurt or with a scoop of cottage cheese.



BLUEBERRY NUTRITION FACTS

- Only 80 fat-free calories per cup, blueberries are a good source of dietary fiber and vitamin C.
- Blueberries rank high in antioxidants that help protect against cancer, heart disease and other age-related diseases.
- Researchers have found compounds in blueberries that help prevent urinary tract infection.
- Just one-half cup of blueberries helps meet the recommended 5 to 9 servings a day of colorful fruits and veggies.

Quick Blueberry Sauce

- 1/4 cup sugar, more or less to taste
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 2 cups fresh or frozen blueberries
- 1/2 cup water or fruit juice

In a saucepan, combine sugar and cornstarch; stir in blueberries. Gradually stir in water. Over medium-high heat, bring to a boil, stirring constantly; boil until sauce is thick and blueberries are softened, about 1 minute. Serve over pancakes, waffles, ice cream or sherbet, cheesecake or sliced pound cake.

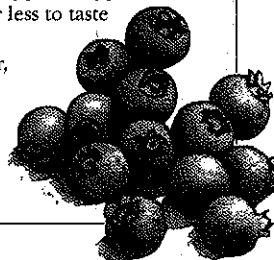
YIELD: About 1-1/2 cups

Blueberry Smoothie

- 2 cups fresh, canned or slightly thawed frozen blueberries
- 1 cup (8-ounce container) lowfat vanilla or other flavored yogurt
- 1 cup fruit juice, such as orange, pineapple or apple
- 1 tablespoon honey or sugar, more or less to taste

In the container of an electric blender, place blueberries, yogurt, juice, and honey; whirl until smooth. Serve immediately.

YIELD: 2 or 3 portions (about 3 cups)



For more blueberry information visit the
U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council at www.ushbc.org.